



March 10, 2023
Education Committee

HB 6842: An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Local Food for Schools Incentive Program and Expansion of The CT Grown for CT Kids Grants Program

Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty and members of the Education Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan, and I am the policy director of End Hunger Connecticut! a statewide anti-hunger organization focusing on advocacy, education, outreach, and research as a resource for policymakers, low-income families, and community organizations. We support HB 6842: An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Local Food for Schools Incentive Program and Expansion of The CT Grown for CT Kids Grants Program.

End Hunger Connecticut! has a long history working with school food programs and farmers. Connecticut's Farm to School program is instrumental in bringing locally grown foods to students and to helping our agricultural community as well. Buying from local farmers and connecting students to food through hands on learning is a win-win for schools, students, farmers, and the Connecticut economy.

Connecticut has an active farm to school culture. This legislation would allow schools and farmers to continue and move forward in a sustained way. Our school meals teach children about nutrition and what is healthy for them, it broadens their horizons. For some children that do not have access to locally grown food or fresh produce this is the best way to get it to them, and they can have that experience.

Local food is one way to get that message across, it's healthier, gives kids the basics that food is from the land, and allows them a choice in what they are eating. Creating a full-time position at SDE to coordinate the program along with continued funding is critical. We know from the last round of grants the demand was double the amount offered. There is huge interest in this program.

Supporting farm to school programs has other economic effects for our state. Farmers rely on the orders. With school meals for all food service directors were able to buy the local food because they knew they had the funding, and it was ongoing. Farmers saw an increase in the partnerships with schools, so they benefited from increased sales that were steady. Using local food also decreases supply chain issues and is better for our climate. It's really a win-win!

End Hunger Connecticut! is in full support of this legislation and urge its passage.

Thank you.